

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Ravalli Curves Property Acquisition Funding

Fish and Wildlife Project No. and Contract No. : 2002-003-00; BPA-09450

Project Manager: Cecilia Brown

Location: Lake County, Montana

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.25 Real property transfers for cultural resources protection, habitat preservation, and wildlife management

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA is proposing to fund the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes to purchase the Ravalli Curves property; a 31-acre parcel of land located 35 miles northwest of Missoula in Lake County, Montana. The United States would hold a conservation easement, which BPA would manage, to permanently protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat.

Funding the purchase of the property would serve as partial mitigation for the construction and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System which includes dams on the main stem Columbia and Snake rivers. This land purchase would specifically satisfy some of BPA's commitments made in the current extension of the 2012-2014 Memorandum of Understanding between the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Bonneville Power Administration.

The property consists of wetland and forested riparian habitat. The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes would develop a management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property. The management plan would be reviewed by BPA for consistency with the conservation easement and the purpose of the acquisition. If BPA proposes to fund any additional activities on the property, further environmental review may be conducted.

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, July 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix A of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist;
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Jennifer A. Snyder

Jennifer Snyder
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Gene Lyndard FOR

Dave Kennedy
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Date: November 17, 2017

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

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Project Site Description

The Ravalli Curves property borders about 0.6 miles of the Jocko River along its right (northern) bank, and is further comprised of riparian forest, wetland, and upland grassland. The property seems to have served as a residential/farm site due to the existing home, barn, and outbuilding structures in the northernmost portion of the property. The majority of the property has been managed for agricultural purposes since at least the 1930s. However, it seems that the intensity of agricultural management has lessened significantly over the past 20 years; many of the barns and outbuildings on the property have not been well maintained and much of the previously cleared areas are now colonized with shrubs and trees.

The property supports a variety of wildlife species including grizzly bear, black bear, mountain lion, bobcat, white-tailed deer, small mammals, and birds. The current fish assemblage of the adjacent Jocko River in this vicinity is the result of past land management activities such as irrigation, agriculture, the development of transportation corridors, and the introduction of non-native fish species. Fish species present include rainbow, brown, and brook trout, mountain whitefish, bull trout (which is an ESA-listed species), and westslope cutthroat trout. Importantly, this site adjoins other Tribal land that is being managed for fisheries values. The Jocko River watershed is an area that has been prioritized by the Tribes as it is very important to native bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There would be no effect due to the land acquisition which includes transfer of title and the creation of a conservation easement. To the extent that stewardship activities may have an effect, it is expected that the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes would comply with all applicable laws and regulations. If any ground-disturbing activities or modifications to the built environment are planned within the area of the acquisition, the Section 106 process would need to be completed prior to implementation. This would include consultation, survey, recordation of resources, and a determination of effect for both archaeological resources and built environment resources.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There would be no effect due to the land acquisition which includes transfer of title and the creation of a conservation easement. To the extent that stewardship activities may have an effect, it is expected that the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes would comply with all applicable laws and regulations.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #2 above.</p>		

4. **Wildlife** (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Explanation: See explanation for #2 above.

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish** (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)

Explanation: See explanation for #2 above.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: See explanation for #2 above.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: See explanation for #2 above.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**

Explanation: See explanation for #2 above.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: See explanation for #2 above.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: See explanation for #2 above.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: See explanation for #2 above.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: See explanation for #2 above.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

- Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and

health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation, if necessary:

- Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

A public notification letter and map will be mailed to neighboring landowners, stakeholders, and relevant elected officials and other interested parties prior to site closing. Advertisements will also be placed in local newspapers, and information will be posted on BPA's public website.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts on any environmentally sensitive resources.

Signed: /s/ Jennifer A. Snyder

Date: November 17, 2017

Jennifer Snyder ECF-4

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Flux Resources, LLC